

accomplished student of criminal justice, he was a testament to his own words, and a shining light to all whom he encountered.

I join the Maryland State Police family and all those with whom he served in grieving the loss of Trooper Brown. He exemplified the best in our communities and, having spoken with his family, I know he was a wonderful son, brother and soon-to-be husband. His death is a tragic reminder of the perils our law enforcement officers face every day, and the bravery they show to ensure our safety.

I honor the life and memory of Trooper First Class Brown, and our thought and prayers are with his family and friends.

YOUNG MEN ENLIGHTENING YOUNGER MEN
ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

Welcome,

My name is Wesley Brown and I am the founder of Young Men Enlightening Younger Men (YMEYM). In September, 2007, my friends and family and I came together to show the young men in the community that there is a bigger and brighter future ahead of them with unlimited possibilities. YMEYM meets together as a group at least once a month to take a field trip somewhere outside of our community and spend time bonding and mentoring. Between field trips, the mentors stay in touch with the young men and encourage them to stay in school, do the best they can in school and in extracurricular activities, respect themselves and each other, and to talk out any conflicts instead of resorting to violence.

All of the mentors have committed much of their personal time and finances during this formation period. YMEYM's meeting location was my residence, where we would sit back and talk about whatever was on the boys' mind. Our goal is to listen and understand their problems and issues. Then we talk together to reach positive solutions to solve the problems. This way, the young men can think before they act, which sometimes results in unjustified punishment.

So, what we created is more than a mentoring program, a tutoring program, or a community service program. This is now a brotherhood of more than 20 young males with distinct personalities and different goals in life who are coming together to be a part of something positive. After researching some of these issues, we found that the majority of today's young men just want to be a part of something and that is why gang violence in the neighborhood is growing so rapidly.

The school system requires that students have a 2.0 GPA in order to play sports. What happens to those who try, but who just don't make it because of poor school systems or a lack of support from home? Where does he go? Who can he turn to? We believe that if a young man is trying to make himself a better man and a productive member of society, then we are PROUD of him—and we tell our young men that. We are proud of them and are here to push them to reach their full potential.

As a young man myself, some may wonder why I am trying so hard to reach these young men, as if I am their parent. Well, I believe that if the community is not encouraging our youth to stand tall and become someone special, what makes us think that the outside world will? After they are exposed to the world outside of their immediate community, reality hits them. They must be prepared and they must be shown the importance of responsibility and accountability and then they will go far in life.

During these teenage stages is when young men develop different characteristics which will continue to live within him during his entire adult life. Too often young men underestimate their own capabilities and greatness. It is our responsibility to step up to the plate and make a positive change. One young man at a time.

WESLEY BROWN,
Founder Young Men
Enlightening Younger
Men, Inc.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOCCIERI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, recent press reports indicate that the House leadership is considering a rules change which would diminish the scope and authority of the Office of Congressional Ethics, or OCE. This is an apparent response to the OCE's decision to forward information gathered during its investigation of the PMA Group to the Justice Department, bypassing the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct in the process. The narrative seems to be that this is just another example of the OCE's succumbing to mission creep or of its growing beyond its intended purpose.

In the interest of full disclosure, I voted against the creation of the OCE in 2007. I felt at the time that the House should be able to establish appropriate standards and to police its behavior through the Standards Committee. I still believe that we should be able to do so, but this controversy over the OCE has effectively shown that, when it comes to removing the cloud that hangs over this body relating to earmarks and to campaign contributions, this body is unwilling, through the Standards Committee, to take the necessary action to uphold the dignity of the institution.

After an investigation lasting more than a year, during which some 200,000 pages of documentation were accumulated, the OCE concluded "there is evidence that some of the commercial entities seeking earmarks from Members of Congress believe that a political donation to the Member has an impact on the Member's decision to author an earmark for that donor."

This information was forwarded to the Standards Committee, which agreed with the conclusion drawn by the OCE. The Standards Committee summarized the OCE's findings as follows: "There is a widespread perception among corporations and lobbyists that campaign contributions provided enhanced access to Members or a greater chance of obtaining earmarks."

Then, quite inexplicably, the Standards Committee dropped the matter, stating that to address the problem is "not within the jurisdiction of the committee." Let me state that again. The Standards Committee said that it lacks the authority to establish a standard that will address what they conclude is a widespread perception of a link between earmarks and campaign contributions. This defies reason.

At the beginning of the 110th Congress, the House adopted rules requiring Members of Congress to certify that they have no "financial interest" in an earmark's being sponsored. "Financial interest" has been defined by the Standards Committee to include a direct or a foreseeable effect on the pecuniary interest for the Member or his or her spouse. The relevant section of the House Ethics Manual then states, "Campaign contributions do not necessarily constitute financial interest."

How can the Standards Committee lack the authority to set standards or to interpret rules? This is particularly confusing when one considers that the Standards Committee can address the issue by simply amending the interpretation of "financial interest" it has already promulgated in the House Ethics Manual.

One need not read very far into the Standards Committee's summary of the OCE's PMA investigation before realizing that Members, through their campaign committees, derive significant benefit from the "widespread perception" of a link between earmarks and campaign contributions. To pretend that this benefit does not constitute "financial interest" is no longer a viable option. We are no longer acting in ignorance. The "wink-wink-nod-nod" game, which we have all known to exist with regard to earmarks and campaign contributions, is now well documented, and the Standards Committee's definition of "financial interest" needs to be updated to reflect these findings.

So where do we go from here?

We can shoot the messenger, as press reports indicate many Members are inclined to do, but the problem with this approach is that the message about the link between earmarks and campaign